

THH VIRASAIVA

established paths and that even in the part which it succeeded in moving into the new path it effected only partial change. It is also true that caste, though condemned in theory and in great part in practice, persisted in the community and that in later days the followers of the faith have dung to distinctions which that institution implies and fosters. Also a new priestly class took the place of the old priestly class with the drawbacks that go with such a class. In spite of all this the experiment made by the movement should be said to have been successful. Single-minded devotion to a great teacher is a characteristic of a great part of the Virasaiva community even to-day. Equality as between various castes within the fold is another important characteristic and a large measure of freedom enjoyed by women another. As the result of the protestant origin of the faith and of the sense of equality among the groups included within it, the community has developed praiseworthy devotion to common interest and remarkable solidarity in the face of common opposition. The Virasaivas of the Karnataka country show to-day a social system, a way of life and a type of culture of which almost any community may well be proud. And this nearly a thousand years after their great teacher disappeared from the world.

